

SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: ATTEMPTS,
IDEATION AND RISK FACTORS OF SOUTH AFRICAN AND GERMAN
ADOLESCENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study compared the suicidal behaviour and related measures of adolescents in high school in Germany (N=318) and South Africa (N=299). Participants completed a series of self-report measures of the SPS (Suicide Probability Scale), PSS-Fa (Perceived Social Support From Family Scale), PSS-Fr (Perceived

Social Support From Friends Scale), SIB (Scale Of Interpersonal Behaviour) and a number of demographic questions. Analyses were conducted using content analysis, correlation coefficients and logistic regression to determine variables related to previous suicide attempts, stepwise multiple regression to account for variables predicting current suicidal risk; and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine differences among the groups and among suicide attempters and non-attempters. 36 German (11.3%) and 48 South African (16.1%) adolescents reported that they had made previous suicide attempts. German adolescents reported 45 (14.2%) suicide attempts in the family and 82 (25.8%) suicide attempts by friends. South African adolescents reported 43 (14.4%) suicide attempts in the family and 92 (30.7%) suicide attempts by friends. The following variables were associated with previous suicide attempts in the German sample: attempted suicide by friends, a life-threatening event, previous psychiatric contact, the death of a friend, low perceived family support, female gender, attempted suicide in the family, suicide of a friend, and low perceived friend support. The following variables were associated with previous suicide attempts in the South African sample: low perceived family support, death of a friend, attempted suicide by friends, female gender, a life-threatening event, previous psychiatric contact, suicide of friends, and attempted suicide in the family. The following variables for the German sample were found to be significant predictors of current suicidal risk: low perceived family and friend support, previous suicide attempts, suicide attempts in the family, a life-threatening event, suicide attempts of friends, suicide of friends, female gender, and previous psychiatric contact. The following variables for the South African sample were found to be significant predictors of current suicidal risk: previous suicide attempts, low perceived family and friend support, death of a friend, a life-threatening event, previous

psychiatric contact, suicide attempts in the family, suicide of friends, and suicide attempts of friends. These findings show that suicidal behaviour is frequent in both countries. Suicidal deaths of friends and family is more prevalent in Germany, whereas religion or belief in god does not protect against suicide attempts in both countries. Results indicate that perceived support from family is a strong protective factor against suicide attempts.

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